

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 190321Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4510
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSYTLTTO ORRR
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MUSCAT 1010

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, MU
SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION IN OMAN: A BRITISH VIEW

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO BRITISH MILITARY ATTACHE IN OMAN,
THE SECURITY SITUATION IN DHOFAR LOOKS GOOD DESPITE ANOTHER
MINOR INCIDENT THAT HAS OCCURRED.THE MAIN DANGER IS
RELATIVELY LONG-TERM AND STEMS FROM A POSSIBLE STEP-UP IN PDRY
BACKING OF THE PFLO INSURGENCY. THE ATTACHE BELIEVES WE CAN
COMPLETELY DISCOUNT RUMORS THAT OMAN WILL TAKE PART IN A
"PREEMPTIVE STRIKE" AGAINST THE PDRY. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARGE DISCUSSED SECURITY SITUATION IN OMAN WITH
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BRITISH MILITARY ATTACHE JULY 17. SIGNIFICANT ITEMS
FROM THE CONVERSATION:

(A) THERE HAS BEEN ANOTHER INCIDENT IN DHOFAR, BUT
THIS TIME A VERY MINOR ONE. IN EARLY JULY, UNKNOWN
PERSONS DAMAGED THREE CONSTRUCTION VEHICLES PARKED
OVERNIGHT AT AN UNGUARDED SITE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

THIS WAS WEST OF THE SALALAH-THAMRAIT ROAD. PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES WERE USED. NOBODY WAS HURT. IT IS NOT KNOWN WHETHER PFLO CADRES WERE THE CULPRITS, THOUGH THE ATTACHE BELIEVES THEY WERE.

(B) OTHERWISE SECURITY IN DHOFAR IS GOOD, IN THE ATTACHE'S OPINION. THE PFLO MAY OF COURSE TRY SOMETHING FURTHER BUT WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO LIMIT ITSELF FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE TO EASY TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY.

(C) THE DHOFAR AUTHORITIES ARE PONDERING HOW BEST TO WEED OUT THE REMAINING (APPROXIMATELY 60) PFLO CADRES IN THE EASTERN DHOFAR MOUNTAINS, BUT NO PLAN HAS YET WON OFFICIAL APPROVAL. THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO MOUNT A CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CADRES WHEN THE CURRENT MONSOON IS OVER IN MID-SEPTEMBER.

(D) SECURITY IN THE REST OF OMAN IS GOOD. THE BORDER DISPUTE WITH RAS AL-KHAIMAH IN THE MUSANDAM AREA IS QUIESCENT.

(E) ASKED FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF WHAT THE PDRY EVENTS WILL MEAN FOR OMAN, THE ATTACHE SAID THAT THE MAIN DANGER LIES IN RENEWED SUPPORT FOR THE PFLO INSURGENCY RATHER THAN IN ANY DIRECT PDRY MILITARY ACTION. CONCEIVABLY, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PDRY PDRY COULD TRY TO RESUPPLY THE CADRES IN THE EASTERN DHOFAR MOUNTAINS, THOUGH THIS WOULD NOT BE EASY BECAUSE OF THE DISTANCE INVOLVED. THEY WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO ESTABLISH A BASE SOMEWHERE IN THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS AS A WAY STATION. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE THE INFILTRATION OF PDRY SOLDIERS DISGUISED AS PFLO INSURGENTS. THERE ARE, IN FACT, SEVERAL WAYS THAT ADEN COULD STEP UP ITS BACKING OF THE INSURGENCY IF IT CHOSE TO DO SO. MOREOVER, THE ATTACHE REMARKED, ONE HAS TO REMEMBER THAT PFLO CADRES ARE BEING TRAINED IN VARIOUS COMMUNIST AND RADICAL COUNTRIES. THESE PEOPLE WILL PROVIDE A CORE OF PROFESSIONAL INSURGENTS WHEN THEY COME BACK. NEVERTHELESS, THE ATTACHE REFLECTED A RATHER RELAXED VIEW OF THE PDRY EVENTS, AND HE IMPLIED THAT THE OMANI MILITARY'S ATTITUDE IS THE SAME. THE PERILS ARE RELATIVELY LONG-TERM, HE SEEMED TO BELIEVE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MUSCAT 1010

(F) CHARGE ALSO ASKED WHETHER, IN ATTACHE'S
VIEW, CREDENCE COULD BE GIVEN TO RUMORS THAT
NORTH YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA, AND OMAN MIGHT TRY
A "PREEMPTIVE STRIKE" AGAINST THE PDRY OUT OF
FEAR FOR THAT COUNTRY'S FUTURE POLICY. THE ATTACHE
WAS EMPHATIC THAT ONE CAN COMPLETELY DISCOUNT
THESE RUMORS AS FAR AS OMAN IS CONCERNED. HE
LIKELIKE BELIEVED THAT THE YAR AND THE SAUDIS WOULD
NOT TRY SUCH A MOVE, FIRST BECAUSE THEY KNOW IT WOULD
PROBABLY FAIL, AND SECONDLY BECAUSE IT WOULD GIVE
THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS A PERFECT EXCUSE TO MOVE
INTO SOUTH YEMEN EVEN MORE STRONGLY.

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3. COMMENTS: IN OUR OPINION, THE ATTACHE IS QUITE
RIGHT THAT OMAN WILL NOT TAKE PART IN ANY MILITARY
ADVENTURE AGAINST THE PDRY. EVEN APART FROM OTHER
CONSIDERATIONS, THE FACT THAT BRITISH OFFICERS RUN THE
OMANI MILITARY IS A BUILT-IN RESTRAINT. WHILE ROUGHLY

HALF OF THESE BRITISH OFFICERS ARE CONTRACT PERSONNEL (AND THEREFORE ONLY INDIRECTLY CONTROLLABLE BY HMG POLICY) THE OTHER HALF, INCLUDING THE THREE SERVICE COMMANDERS, ARE SERVING BRITISH OFFICERS ON SECONDMENT. WE THEREFORE FIND IT VERY HARD TO PICTURE THE OMANI MILITARY ENGAGING IN ANYTHING BUT DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE PDRY.

4. THE ATTACHE'S RATHER RELAXED VIEW OF THE NEAR-TERM DANGERS PROBABLY REFLECTS MORE A BRITISH THAN AN OMANI PERSPECTIVE. ALTHOUGH WE, LIKE HIM, HAVE DETECTED A FEELING HERE THAT THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCE OF THE ADEN EVENTS IS NOT NECESSARILY ALARMING, FOR OMAN, WE BELIEVE THE OMANGOV POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS DISTINCTLY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE FUTURE COURSE OF PDRY POLICY.
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